

476
“A New Out-
post of the
Church in the
Heart of China.”



THE MISSION AT CHANGSHA, CHINA

BY THE REVEREND S. HARRINGTON LITTELL

HUNAN was the last of China's eighteen provinces to be opened to the Gospel, and to foreign trade. Since Changsha, its capital city, was made a treaty port in July, 1904, traders of many nationalities have been rushing in, to secure a footing in one of the richest and sturdiest parts of the empire. But, as usual, they are some years behind the missionaries of the Gospel, who have been at work systematically, for many years travelling throughout the province, breaking down prejudice, spreading literature, and preaching—men who lived in Chinese house-boats, anchoring near cities into which they might not enter, driven sometimes from city to city, ever needing to be on the alert against blind prejudice, and the fanatic resolution of the Hunanese to keep foreigners out of their borders.

I. THE BEGINNINGS AT CHANGSHA

IN July, 1902, two years before the city was opened for trade, we entered, and began work under Bishop Ingle, with the Rev. S. C. Hwang as our resident priest-in-charge. With Mr. Hwang went a well-trained catechist, and one of the ablest of the graduates of our Normal School, and work began auspiciously. For a year and three months the station was supported entirely by the foreign members of the mission in the field.

II. DIFFICULTIES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

HARDLY a year passed before clouds began to gather over the work. Men and women from outside were coming to believe and find new life, but within there were grievous disappointments. The catechist became involved in outside affairs, absorbed in the love of money, and resigned only in time to avoid dismissal. The teacher yielded to the pride of learning, and not walking humbly with his God, fell grievously. Moreover, several former Christians from other places, three ex-communicants, came to the city under foreign employ, and became active adversaries of all that is good and Christian. One, living in sin openly, tried to bribe every member of our congregation to leave us, on promise of giving lucrative positions—and brought away two men. One has returned and is now a penitent, awaiting the expiration of his period of discipline before being admitted again to the full privileges of the Church. The teacher still clings to us, but he cannot be restored to his place in the school.

III. THE MORE ENDURING BLESSINGS

BUT along with these troubles came blessings, greater and more lasting than they. Good Christians came also to the city; some in the post-office, others in government schools, others in business, and one, most earnest and able of all (who won the degree of B.S. in America at Vanderbilt University several years ago), as English interpreter to Tuan Fang, the highest official in the province. These, mostly graduates of St. John's College or Boone

School, are among the strongest witnesses to the Faith, and are not afraid by word and example to proclaim the power and love of Christ.

IV. A GOOD REPUTATION

ON my last visit I heard frequently both from Chinese sources and from foreign workers in other missions, of the good name which our mission bears. "It is the best work in the city," said several people not in our mission; who then proceeded to tell us why this is so. It was gratifying, indeed, to hear them speak of the ability and earnestness of our Chinese priest. Three foreigners said they felt sorely the lack of a well-trained, educated Chinese ministry, which is the strength of our work. No other body of Christians in the Hankow District can begin to compare with the Church in this respect. Although we have no American missionaries to send to Changsha, our work is more advanced than any of the six other missions having resident foreign workers. Mr. Hwang has been trained with us from childhood, and has had the best care and oversight that some of our most able workers in the past have been able to give, and we are now seeing the results.

V. HOW THE MISSION GRIPS THE YOUNG MEN

THE most conspicuous feature of his work is the remarkable hold he has obtained upon the pick of all the young men of the city. As a gentleman, not in the mission work, said: "Every English-speaking Chinese lad—and there are a good many in Changsha now—is connected with your

mission." Every young man of promise or ambition finds himself at ease in the group of men who have gathered around Mr. Hwang. Those who have studied abroad (for the most part in Japan) are to be found in the society he has organized for the purpose of securing a hold upon the young, wide-awake students and teachers, who are so prominent in the changing conditions, the almost revolutionary progress in Hunan, which are attracting the attention of the empire. This organization, called "The Daily Progress Reading-room," began in a humble way, and has now a membership of fully eighty, while possibly forty more attend as visitors when permitted. It is the only place in the city where a man of vision, a man of learning, a man of thought, a man of moral earnestness, can meet with men of like disposition, and find scope for his abilities and aspirations. Think of the opportunity! The best material in the whole province in our hands! The rising generation of leaders, nearly a hundred of them, under our direct influence! Some are Christians already; some catechumens; many are eager searchers for truth and attend regularly the Church services. Some wear foreign dress, others, while still in Chinese clothes, have dispensed with queues. All are young and enthusiastic. Mr. Hwang is their president, directing their reading, giving them that which he has been given, showing by every opportunity he has the claims of the true God, and of the Church of Christ. Twelve of these have been received as catechumens, and have been sent to Japan by the Chinese Government at its own expense to study, as they are indeed picked men.

VI. FORCED INTO DEBT

THE development of the work has been so rapid and promising that the immediate purchase of suitable property became imperative, and last spring we purchased an admirably located place, large and cheap, when all things are taken into consideration. The grounds were nearly covered with rambling buildings, some of which have been readily altered to suit our purpose. The price was \$5,300, and we did not have it, nor a tenth of it, when we purchased, yet we went on, and did what we felt was right, and believed that somehow the funds would come. \$4,550 have come and we need only \$750 more to pay off the entire indebtedness.

VII. THE IMMEDIATE NEED

OUR most pressing need now is for resident foreigners in Changsha, to counsel with and direct the Chinese worker, and to extend the work to neighboring towns, where opportunities are already offering. At such a centre as Changsha, too, there should be a boarding school for girls—an institution not yet established, I believe, anywhere in Hunan Province. The residences for foreign workers, if built promptly, before prices rise much higher, could be constructed for \$6,000, and would be occupied as soon as built, for Bishop Roots plans to send foreigners to Changsha as soon as there is a house for them. So, then, the immediate need for the station, is:

<i>For debt on land</i>	-	-	\$ 750
<i>For mission residence</i>	-	-	6,000
			<hr/>
			\$6,750

In sending offerings to the Missions House, New York, for this object, it is necessary to state plainly that they are "Special for Changsha."

VIII. THE GOOD OFFICES OF A BUDDHIST MONK

A PARTICULARLY interesting fact connected with this purchase is that the first practical suggestion which set us thinking seriously about buying now, came from a Buddhist priest, the second highest abbot of all Changsha. In return to Mr. Hwang for befriending a pilgrim, an old Buddhist monk, the abbot, named Chin Lien, "Green Lotus," became very friendly with our priest. He attends services now and then, and seems to appreciate our work. One day he said: "Why do you not establish your work here permanently by securing your own property?" "All right," said Mr. Hwang, half jokingly, "you show me a suitable place and help us get it, and we will consider the proposition." "I will," answered the Buddhist promptly. He took Mr. Hwang at once to see two houses under his control. This started us off, and at first we thought of buying one of his places, but it proved too small for much growth—too small, in fact, for our present needs—so we looked further and did better. Two weeks after the purchase the man who sold the property told Mr. Hwang that if he had known how greatly prices were rising he would not have sold to us. A month later a "land office" was organized in Changsha to control all sales with the avowed object of preventing all foreigners (but chiefly merchants) from securing prop-

erty in the city. So effective has this organization been that foreigners have tried in vain ever since to buy land. Thus our prompt action in seizing the opportunity on faith, is seen to be doubly justified.

IX. THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT OF THE CHANGSHA CHURCH

ONE of the best features of the work is the readiness of the Changsha Christians to extend the Church to other cities in Hunan. On their recommendation a new station has been opened at Siangtan, thirty miles further up the Siang river, the second city commercially in the Province. The initial expenses for furniture, books, rent, etc. were all borne by the Changsha congregation, and still the running expenses are provided chiefly in Changsha. Such earnestness should be encouraged by our prayers and offerings, and I beg these from any who are interested in this young but vigorous mission.



¶ All offerings to meet the special need at Changsha should be sent, marked "Special for Changsha" to MR. GEORGE C. THOMAS, Treasurer, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York City, to whom also should be sent offerings for all mission work in China or elsewhere.

¶ Copies of this leaflet may be had in any quantity by asking the Corresponding Secretary, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York, for leaflet No. 244.